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ABSTRACT

To garner administrative support and to develop meaningful public relations in the academic, scholastic, and local communities, individual events program directors should focus their efforts on things over which they have control. First, directors should develop behavioral objectives for individual events programs which are consistent with the mission and goals of the sponsoring educational institutions. This includes codes of conduct for participants in individual events. Next, the director should seek to maximize student achievement by developing behavioral objectives that address the cognitive and affective realms of the learner and by promoting programs of independent study to help students prepare to participate in individual events. With regard to scholarship, program directors and individual events coaches should both cultivate and utilize as fully as possible faculty in other disciplines to assess the content of student products. Faculty in individual events programs should make every effort to assure high standards of scholarship are met by each student in preparation of each presentation. The final area of concern by directors is service. Individual events programs should involve themselves in presentations before academic, scholastic, and community audiences consistent with the mission of the institution to serve such groups. Institutional provision of necessary equipment and funding is critical to the development of this service dimension. (An appendix contains brief descriptions of four books helpful to forensics programs.) (KEH)

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Earning Support for Individual Events Programs

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Abstract

This paper is divided into four areas. The first provides suggestions for the general orientation of the individual events program. The remaining areas focus on the three major functions of colleges and universities in the U.S. today: instruction, scholarship, and service. (Scholarship is approached as undergraduate scholarship, as another conference group is focusing on research in individual events.) In each area, I suggest steps directors of individual events programs may take to become a more integral part of the academic communities in which their programs are housed. Those steps take the form of recommendations. Only two of the recommendations in this document call for action on the part of college/university administrations. The remainder may be implemented by faculty directing individual events programs.

Earning Support

Previous developmental conferences in forensics have articulated statements concerning institutional support which place substantial responsibility on the institution providing funding for the program. Typically, forensics directors bemoan the lack of available funds, the lack of institutional recognition, and the lack of support staff for their programs. We have probably all been guilty of feeling unappreciated on our own campuses or feeling as if our vice presidents/deans/division– or department heads did not understand the value of the individual events program. This paper contends there are a number of steps we should take to encourage institutional support. The underlying premise is that we will not do so privately, but will involve others within the institution in relevant decisions. I further assume we will keep others informed of program progress through annual reports distributed to department/division heads and school deans/vice presidents. It is a mistake simply to keep our own counsel. Ideally, we will try to help those we wish to help us, or at least attempt to speak their language.

This paper is divided into four areas. The first provides suggestions for the general orientation of the individual events program. The remaining areas focus on the three major functions of colleges and universities in the U.S. today: instruction, scholarship, and service. (Scholarship is approached as undergraduate scholarship, as another group at this conference is focusing on research in individual events.) In each area, I suggest steps directors of individual events programs may take to become a more integral part of the academic communities in which their programs are housed.

general orientation

Whether curricular, cocurricular, or extracurricular, the individual events program is part of the educational program at an academic institution. As such, it should be treated as any academic program, and evaluation should be based on progress toward objectives. Individual events programs are justified only insofar as they enhance the education of the undergraduate and graduate students who participate as speakers, readers, contestants, and critic–judges of individual events activities. Academic programs exist to educate students, after all. If individual events educate students, that education should yield observable results. If the results may be observed, they must be acted out in behavior. Students who participate in individual events programs should exhibit specified behaviors as a result of such participation. If the goal of the individual events program is to enable students to perform observable behaviors, there is no reason those behaviors cannot be codified into a set of behavioral objectives against which student (and program) progress may be measured.

recommendation 1

Directors of individual events programs should develop behavioral objectives for such programs.

Individual events programs do not exist in vaccuums. Rather, they are sponsored, funded, and made possible through the aegis of academic institutions. Such institutions exist for specific purposes, which may be articulated in the mission and goals statement of each institution. Student participants in individual events programs are recruited from these institutions, and are subject to the academic and social codes in force at these

institutions. The individual events program ought to provide an extension to rather than an exception from the articulated codes and mission of the institution.

recommendation 2

The objectives of the individual events program should be consistent with the mission and goals of the sponsoring educational institution; codes of conduct for participants in individual events should be consistent with institutional codes of conduct.

maximizing student achievement

Participation should enable students to reach their fullest potential in both cognitive and affective realms. For example, students should learn about speaking and about interpreting written text, about the specific subject matter of their speeches and about the literature from which their selections are excerpted. They should also learn how to learn—how to conduct thorough and ongoing research, how to search out compelling literature, how to locate information in a systematic manner, and how to compile it in meaningful ways. But there should be more. Participants in individual events programs should mature emotionally and morally as well as intellectually. Participants should learn to cope with both victory and defeat. They should learn to deal with oral and written evaluation by trained and lay critics and to respond to such criticism appropriately. They should learn to accept the significance of others through competition and through cooperation. They should, in short, move closer toward the goal of becoming functional contributors to the society which makes possible their education and, in most cases, pays for it as well. The individual events program alone is insufficient to guarantee liberally–

educated graduates, but it should contribute significantly toward that end for those students who choose to participate in such activities.

recommendation 3

Behavioral objectives for individual events forensics programs should address the cognitive and affective realms of the learner.

Behavioral objectives are only meaningful if faculty see themselves as educators. Faculty who are also program administrators, travel agents, chauffers, meal planners, bursars, coaches, and counselors may not perceive individual events instruction to be their primary responsibility, especially in light of other course and committee assignments within the institution and the academic department. But instruction (education) justifies the activity. Individual events instruction can be provided efficiently. Individual events provide constant opportunity for individualized instruction and faculty tutorials. Indeed, such instruction seems to demand individualization. Many student participants are highly motivated. Most are encouraged by the prospect of competition, which serves to further increase their motivation. Highly motivated students represent the best candidates for individualized instruction. In order to maximize the efficiency of such instruction, it should be provided systematically (especially to beginning student participants). Specific readings and activities should familiarize students with selected events, resources, and theory. Such preparation should enable students to learn at their own pace and, after consultation and tutorials with responsible faculty, to present chosen events in appropriate competitive or public forums. Individualized programs also enable the responsible faculty member to provide instruction without lecturing on nine or more events each semester. Such a

system of individualized instruction through quasi–independent study enables the individual events faculty to provide consistent, high–quality instruction to interested students. This system provides the "coach" with a specific ongoing instructional function and specifies the manner in which that function may be carried out. It further places the responsibility for preparation on the motivated student.

recommendation 4

Faculty should develop programs of independent study to help students prepare to participate in the individual events program.

Development of materials for such programmed instruction requires institutional support in the form of release time, secretarial support, provision of library and computer services, and quite possibly access to a learning lab for student participants. Faculty must be free to develop materials in each of the national individual events, likely ongoing public presentation or criticism assignments (e.g., judging at club contests), and related areas (e.g., researching through the institution library, cultivating faculty contacts, conduct during tournaments, team travel). Faculty must also have time to keep such materials current through updating and revision.

recommendation 5

Educational institutions should encourage faculty to develop programs of independent study for individual events program participants by providing time and resources for such development and providing resources for the use of such materials when they have been prepared.

scholarship

Participation in individual events encourages students to decompartmentalize knowledge. For example, they use what they learn in literature classes to improve their performance in speech communication activities, and they use what they learn in those activities to improve their understanding of literature. They integrate concepts learned in a variety of disciplines to articulate their understanding of major issues confronting themselves and their society. In short, by its very nature individual events activity is interdisciplinary. While the focus of individual events program directors is on the manner in which students communicate these ideas, the ideas themselves are drawn from the broadest range of disciplines. It is both unrealistic and impossible for directors of individual events programs to establish and maintain subject matter expertise in all disciplines. Instead, they must rely on the cooperation of faculty colleagues in appropriate disciplines to provide content–related criticism of student efforts.

recommendation 6

Individual events program directors and coaches should both cultivate and utilize as fully as possible faculty in other disciplines to assess the content of student products.

Because individual events critics are likely to be untrained volunteers or experts in speech communication, they are more likely to provide criticism of the form than the substance of speeches and readings. For instance, a teacher of speech may not be familiar with contemporary dramatic literature, and a volunteer from the theatre department may not feel comfortable with recent developments in rhetorical theory. Because critics cannot reasonably be expected to provide subject matter expertize on every topic students may opt to

develop, content criticism is most reasonably the purview of faculty working with the student. Failure to assure the highest quality scholarship the student can muster is tantamount to encouraging sophistry.

recommendation 7

Faculty in individual events programs should make every effort to assure high standards of scholarship are met by each student in preparation of each presentation.

service

Individual events presentations are readily adaptable to a variety of audiences. They represent an opportunity for the individual events program to represent itself to a variety of constituencies and to serve a variety of constituencies at the same time. Local service clubs and civic organizations meet regularly, usually over a meal, and often include some sort of program (entertainment or enlightenment as well as business) in their meetings. An active individual events program should be able to serve such organizations by helping to fulfill both of the first two program functions. The organization benefits from a carefully prepared program, and the individual events program benefits from a broader base of exposure. Such programming should also be provided for campus–based organizations and for area elementary and secondary schools, with similar benefits for all concerned and the additional program benefit of what should prove to be an effective tool for recruitment.

recommendation 8

Individual events programs should involve themselves in presentations before academic, scholastic, and community audiences consistent with the mission of the institution to serve such groups.

Developing networks to make such service possible requires considerable effort and perseverance. It also helps to have access to a computer with good database, page layout, and project planning programs. A telephone answering machine to secure accurate messages is also a plus. As above, administrative support may prove the critical factor in making such a service dimension a reality. Secretarial time, computer services, and software support may enable the program director to track the variety of individual projects necessary to provide consistently high quality programming for such engagements. Brochure preparation, printing, postage, and transportation costs represent additional areas where the institution may demonstrate support. Institutions wishing to avail themselves of this service dimension of the individual events program should be willing to provide appropriate support.

recommendation 9

Institutional provision of necessary equipment and funding is critical to the development of the service dimension of the individual events program.

conclusion

This paper contends that to garner administrative support and to develop meaningful public relations in the academic, scholastic, and local communities individual events program directors should focus their efforts on things they can control. They cannot control local media. Decisions to cover or ignore program functions or achievements, accuracy and length of reportage, and positioning of coverage are decisions made by others. What directors of individual events programs can do is expose their programs continually through ongoing presentations before local audiences which will contain not

only some of those decision makers, but also potential supporters and recruits. Program directors cannot control administrative budget decisions or commitment to the concept of individual events. What individual events program directors can do is establish educational objectives by which they can measure the progress of student participants. So long as those objectives are consistent with the mission of the sponsoring institution and the evaluation is positive (or provides meaningful correction toward positive results) the program should be easily defended and should make sense to administrators. Programmed individual study may be the most efficient method of assuring high quality instruction in individual events without creating tension between the program need for instruction and institutional staffing needs. (Development of programmed individual instruction creates only a temporary imbalance, and one which promises immediate and long–term dividends.) Continual attention to high academic standards and involvement of other institutional faculty should further guarantee the academic legitimacy of the individual events program while broadening the base of institutional support. Involvement of other faculty should also enhance the undergraduate experience of participating students.

This paper is predicated on a single idea: the individual events program is no exception to the general rule that educational programs exist to develop student potential, to teach. The nine recommendations represent an attempt to help directors of such programs assure they may continue to strive toward that objective.

Appendix

HELPFUL BOOKS

Banathy, B. H. (1968). Instructional systems. Belmont, CA: Fearon Publishers.

Banathy provides a quick (86 pages) introduction to the notion of systems analysis in the development and evaluatin of educational programs. Administrators are likely to have been exposed to this type of reasoning and jargon (there is a 5–page glossary), so this text is helpful preparation toward enhanced communication. The most conspicuous aspects of the systems approach occur as the administrator/faculty: 1) insist on a clear definition of purpose; 2) examine the characteristics of the input; 3) consider alternatives and identify what has to be done, when and where, and by whom or what; 4) implement a system and tests output; and 5) identify and implement any necessary adjustments.

Bowen, H. R. & Douglass, G. K. (1971). Efficiency in liberal education: A study of comparative instructional costs for different ways of organizing teaching–learning in a liberal arts college. New York: McGraw–Hill.

Administrators are likely to have read this book, especially if they hold an EdD in administration. The book was prepared for the Macalester Foundation and issued by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, so it is rather highly regarded. Bowen and Douglass declare "The efficiency problem is to alter favorably the ratio of two variables, cost and quality. The best of all possible worlds exists when it is possible to cut costs and raise quality at the same time." This text provides a variety of potential strategies for reducing costs and also addresses the relative efficiency of different modes of instruction.

Tyler, R. W. (1949). Basic principles of curriculum and instruction. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

This is the fundamental text in the area of curriculum and instruction. Tyler suggests a planner faces five questions: 1) What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?; 2) How can learning experiences be selected which are likely to be useful in attaining those objectives?; 3) How can those learning experiences be organized for effective instruction?; 4) How can the effectiveness of those learning experiences be evaluated?; and How can a school or college staff work on curriculum building?

Vargas, J. S. (1972). Writing worthwhile behavioral objectives. New York: Harper.

This self–instructional text by the daughter of B. F. Skinner provides exercises and explanation to assis instructors with the task of creating decent behavioral objectives. The four requirements of a behaviora objective are : 1) it refers to the learner; 2) it specifies an observable behavior to be demonstrated; 3) it states a level or criterion of acceptable performance; and 4) it does not contain unnecessary words.